

# ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council  
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association  
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

EDITORIAL OFFICE · 17 ROUTE DE MALAGNOU · GENEVA · SWITZERLAND  
TEL. 36 71 30 · CABLES OIKOUMENE U.S. ENQUIRIES : WCC, 475, RIVERSIDE DRIVE, NEW YORK 27: TEL. RIVERSIDE 9-4887

No. 11 - 28th Year

17th March, 1961



On Other Pages

Prague Peace Conference Seeks Christian Unity . . . . .	2
Housing Sought for African UN Delegates in New York . . . . .	3
Church of Scotland Statement on Polaris Missles . . . . .	4
WCC Urged to Adopt World Mission Concept . . . . .	6
US Baptists Commend President on School Aid Stand . . . . .	7
Berlin Remains Site for 10th Kirchentag . . . . .	8
In Brief . . . . .	9

Russian Orthodox Representatives Visit World Council

(Geneva) - Four representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate have ended a four-day visit to World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva, the latest in a series of "get-acquainted" meetings started in 1958.

Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, WCC general secretary, in a statement issued at the visit's conclusion said that "good progress" had been made in discussions of the relationships and further exchanges between the two bodies and that "decisions in the light of these discussions will be taken later".

The delegation was headed by Bishop Nikodim of Jaroslavl and Rostov, head of the Department of Foreign Church Relations of the Patriarchate; and included Protopriest Borovoi, vice-chairman of the Department; Alex Buevsky, Department secretary and Victor Alexeev, consultant for relations with the World Council.

The delegation brought with it a valuable collection of books on the Russian Orthodox Church for the World Council's libraries. The World Council had earlier sent books to the libraries of the Patriarchate and its Zagorsk and Leningrad theological academies.





The exchange of visits was started in 1958 at a meeting of representatives of the WCC and the Patriarchate at Utrecht, the Netherlands. Since then representatives of the Russian Church have twice visited in Geneva and have attended both the 1959 and 1960 meetings of the WCC's Central Committee. In December, 1959, a five-member World Council delegation made a two weeks' visit in Russia as the guest of the Patriarch. EPS, Geneva.

### Prague Peace Conference Seeks Christian Unity

(Prague) - The achievement of "genuine" Christian unity will be one of the major aims of the All-Christian Peace Assembly to be held here June 13-18, a noted Czechoslovakian theologian has declared.

"It is our concern to create the atmosphere of genuine peace and trust among ourselves (and) to ban all distrust and suspicion from our ranks...", said Dr. Josef L. Hromádka, a member of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches. He made the comments in an article outlining the problems and goals of the assembly published in the official news service of the Protestant churches of Czechoslovakia.

"If we fight tension in the world, we have to combat it in our midst," he remarked. "If we want to tear out the roots of the cold war between our nations, we must first tear them out of our own hearts. The cold war between the churches and within them is going on, endowing the cold war between nations with the particularly dangerous dimensions of religious consecration.

"If we want to call statesmen and nations to cooperation, we have to cooperate, first of all, on the platform of our churches. If our efforts are to contribute towards real reconciliation among men all over the world, the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness must be apparent and powerful among us.

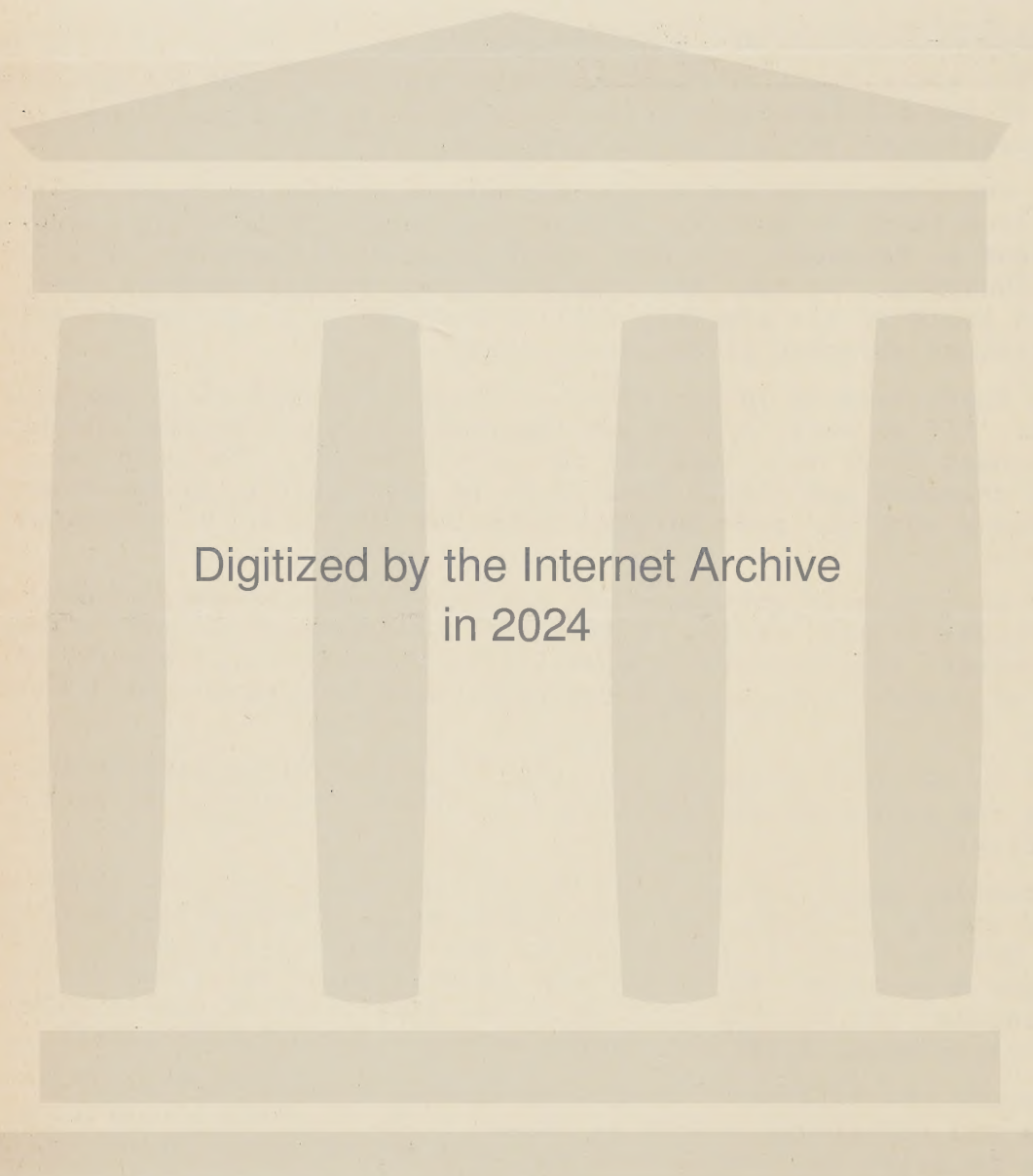
"Until we overcome mistrust and suspicion, self-righteousness and pride, intolerance and hatred among ourselves," he added, "our activity must remain mere hypocrisy."

Dr. Hromádka made it clear that Christians must not presume themselves better than others or judge them self-righteously. They must rather ask themselves how they are "to blame for the present situation of the world" and what they have to do "to help create conditions in which human society and (individuals) may be able to live in the atmosphere of peace, mutual trust and cooperation, spiritual health and joyful hope". He added:

"The needs and difficulties of contemporary society surpass the strength of individuals and individual churches. Only if the churches become aware of their unity in faith in Jesus Christ can they become active agents in the struggle for peace and genuine cooperation."

Pointing out that the Prague assembly is deliberately seeking to "preserve the elasticity and mobility of (a) working fellowship" and does not want to become "a new ecumenical institution", Dr. Hromádka said the conference is open "for cooperation with all believing Christians who wish to enter our circle, from the Orthodox Church to churches and groups without any fixed dogmatic, liturgical or organizational forms".

The Czech theologian noted that while the Roman Catholic Church is not expected to be represented at the assembly, it "is not because we would close



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024



our ranks against them". However, he added:

"It seems to us... that our relations with members of the Roman Catholic Church have not yet reached the state of making it possible for us to enter into such close and unqualified cooperation with them as exists between our churches... However, we should be grateful for their goodwill and for any advice they could offer us."

EPS, Geneva.

#### German Theologian Named To WCC Staff

(Geneva) - A German theologian and former leader of the German Student Christian Movement has been named executive secretary of the Department on Evangelism of the World Council of Churches.

Announcement of the appointment of Dr. Hans Jochen Margull, 35, of the theological faculty of the University of Hamburg, has been made at WCC headquarters in Geneva. The appointment is effective immediately.

Dr. Margull has been university assistant (Universitätsassistent) at Hamburg for the past five years and during 1960 was a lecturer (Privatdozent) in missions and ecumenics at the University. Earlier he was for two years (1953-1955) the study secretary of the German Student Christian Movement (Evangelische Studentengemeinde in Deutschland).

In his new position Dr. Margull will supervise the WCC's study programme of world-wide evangelism.

Dr. Margull received his doctorates degree in theology from Hamburg University in 1958, and his Master of Sacred Theology degree from The Biblical Seminary in New York in 1950. He also attended the universities of Greifswald, Halle and Mainz in Germany. He is a member of the Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau, Germany, and is the author of two books and numerous publications.

EPS, Geneva.

#### Housing Sought for African UN Delegates in New York

(New York) - The Protestant Council of the City of New York has deplored recent cases of discriminatory practices against African envoys to the United Nations who are seeking housing for their families in the city.

The council has contacted all clergymen whose parishes are in the "preferred" residential locale of UN delegates and has urged them to personally assist African representatives in locating housing. It has further called upon them to contact owners and managers of apartment buildings and remind them of city's Fair Housing Practices Law, and to stress to their own parishioners the opportunity to welcome the delegates "in a positive and outgoing manner".

"We in Manhattan face a singular and unavoidable responsibility to practice true hospitality to the stranger in our midst," the Rev. Austin McRaven Warner, executive secretary of the council's Manhattan Division, wrote to the ministers. "Housing bias against Negro citizens of this country is equally inexcusable and immoral, if not more so."

The letter pointed out that with the opening of the UN General Assembly and the expected arrival of some 60 African delegates from new member nations the clergymen's "duty becomes more imperative".





Meanwhile, the Committee of Religious Leaders of the City of New York, representing Protestants, Catholics and Jews, has also urged the municipal Real Estate Board to recognize the need for making suitable housing available immediately for the African delegates. EPS, Geneva.

### Improved Christian-Buddhist Relations Sought

(Rangoon) - A six-day consultation aimed at improving communication between Christians and Buddhists has been held in Rangoon, Burma.

Christian leaders from three predominantly Buddhist countries - Burma, Ceylon and Thailand - noted at the outset of the conference that there has been a tendency among Christians to think of evangelism more as a call to teach Christianity to non-Christians rather than as an opportunity to listen to what non-Christians have to say.

Principal speakers included the Rev. U. Thettila, a Buddhist priest and former lecturer on Buddhism at Rangoon University; the Rev. Harry B. Partin of Geneva, staff member of the World Council of Churches' Division of Studies; the Rev. Victor Hayward of London, a secretary of the International Missionary Council; and U. Kyaw Than of Rangoon, a secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference. EPS, Geneva.

### Church of Scotland Statement on Polaris Missiles

(Edinburgh) - Church of Scotland leaders, concerned about the furor over the establishment of a US Polaris-equipped submarine base at Holy Loch, have called upon the government to take new initiatives to help prevent the necessity of sending the submarines on "exercises or missions which might increase the danger of war".

Meeting in spring session here the Commission of the church's Assembly took the action in adopting a report originally scheduled to come before the Assembly at its May meeting. There was initially some doubt about whether the statement should come before the meeting, which had an attendance of 300 as compared with 1450 expected at the Assembly. However, spokesmen for three of the large presbyteries said the matter was so urgent that it was imperative to have immediate consideration of the report. A majority vote decided that the report should be received, debated and voted upon.

The report as adopted firmly rejects unilateral renunciation of nuclear deterrents, but calls upon the government to take new initiatives in arms control and disarmament.

It says further that the government should be prepared to strengthen conventional forces, if this would reduce dependence on nuclear deterrents and ensure that the Polaris-equipped submarines would not be sent on missions or exercises which might jeopardize peace.

The Rev. J. R. Gray, Glasgow, convener of the Church and National Committee on Nuclear Armaments and the Polaris Missile, which prepared the statement, said the new base had "uncovered something like panic in the minds and hearts of many of our fellow countrymen, and the church has a duty to speak to this panic".

"They know the final government of the world is in God's hands," he said, "but there must be no complacency. That the Polaris and other weapons of mass destruction should be manufactured at all should fill us with shame and horror - with half the world hungry, that such vast sums should be spent in utterly wasteful fashion."





The Commission also asked the government to give new consideration to sending "massive aid" to less developed countries, "even at considerable sacrifice on our part" and recommended that during the weeks preceeding Easter, prayers for "pardon, guidance and grace in the present critical situation" should be offered in every parish church and that on Good Friday there should be special prayers for world peace and reconciliation.

EPS, Geneva.

#### Need for Local Ecumenical Cooperation Cited

(Hamburg) - The future success of the ecumenical movement will not be decided at the top but at the lowest levels of local cooperation among the various religious bodies, a German Lutheran leader has told an ecumenical workshop here.

Bishop Heinrich Meyer of Luebeck, chairman of the Lutheran World Federation's Commission for World Mission, said all large ecumenical conferences are a "dangerous self-deceit" unless they are paralleled by a mutual approach to the local practical situation at home by different denominations.

Establishment of a prayer community among all Christians and coordination of various prayer observances was further advocated by Bishop Meyer. He suggested the latter might involve the World Council of Churches' Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the Roman Catholic Chair of Unity Octave, both observed January 18-25; and the World's Evangelical Alliance's Universal Week of Prayer, usually held during the first week of January.

Bishop Meyer's suggestion was viewed as particularly significant here because for the first time since 1942, those German Protestant churches which ordinarily participate in the WCC's Week of Prayer did not do so this year. Instead these churches scheduled their unity observances during the week preceding Whitsunday, May 14-20, the period during which the observances were held from 1920 to 1941.

EPS, Geneva.

#### US Lutheran Church Votes for Four-Way Merger

(Hancock, Mich) - Members of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (Suomi Synod) have decided by a 77 per cent majority to merge with three other Lutheran bodies.

The results of the referendum conducted in the synod's congregations, February 5-12 and announced last week, showed 8,321 votes in favour of the merger and 2,448 opposed. All but two of the church's 154 congregations voted. Approval by two-thirds of the members voting was required.

The proposed merger will bring together the Suomi Synod, (36,000 members), Augustana Lutheran Church (605,000), the United Lutheran Church in America (2,477,000) and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (24,000). The four bodies are expected to merge in June of 1962 into the Lutheran Church in America.

EPS, Geneva.





### WCC Urged to Adopt World Mission Concept

(Sydney) - The World Council of Churches will be asked to adopt the conception of a "world Christian mission" when it holds its Third Assembly in New Delhi, India, November 18- December 6.

A resolution containing the recommendation was adopted at the 15th annual meeting of the Australian Council of Churches at the Gibulla conference centre in Menangle, west of Sydney.

In moving adoption of the resolution, the Rev. Alan Walker, superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission here, told the 80 delegates of the council's 10 affiliated churches;

"At Amsterdam we said 'we intend to stay together'; at Evanston, we said 'we shall grow together'. The Third Assembly at New Delhi should declare, 'We shall go one mission together.'" (The first and second assemblies of the World Council of Churches were held at Amsterdam and Evanston (USA), respectively)

The resolution noted that the International Missionary Council will merge with the World Council at the New Delhi assembly.

"It could be that God will call His Church in a new way to world mission" at New Delhi, the resolution noted. "It may be that only through mission will God be able to deepen the unity and renewal of His Church."

Elected new council president at the four-day meeting was the Rt. Rev. A. C. Watson, moderator-general of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and long a supporter of the ecumenical movement. He succeeds the Most Rev. R. C. Halse, Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane.

In other matters, Dr. Watson informed the delegates of improved relations between the churches of Russia and the West.

Pointing out that while the Russian Orthodox Church is not yet affiliated with the World Council, it sent observers to the WCC's Central Committee meeting at St. Andrews, Scotland, last August. He further noted that the WCC's policies have helped to "depoison" relations between Russia and the West in church affairs.

The council also agreed to contribute £60,000 (US\$180,000) to the inter-church aid programme of the WCC in 1961. It further agreed to purchase property to establish a home for aged and needy White Russian refugees presently living in Sydney. Twenty-five refugees will be accepted immediately.

### Islam Seen Greatest Threat to Christianity in Africa

(London) - Warnings of the growing menace of Islam on the African Continent came from three quarters last week.

Speaking in London, Bishop Stephen Bayne, executive officer of the Anglican Communion, declared that Islam is the greatest threat to Christianity on the Continent.

Moslem missionaries are proving more adaptable than Christian missionaries he said, and are preaching an austere monotheism which is finding wide acceptance.





Bishop Bayne's warning was repeated in a speech, also in London, by the Rev. J. M. Burns, domestic chaplain to the Archbishop of Capetown. Mr. Burns reported that he had seen a noticeable drift from Orthodox Christianity.

He said it is "being increasingly viewed as allied with Western domination. The Church in South Africa is being attacked openly and this main attack comes from the resurgent forces of Islam. Africans are turning in ever increasing numbers to this alien faith."

Meanwhile last week in the United States, leaders of one of the major US Negro churches called upon their congregations to help send more Negro teachers and preachers to Africa to "counteract the Islamic charge that Christianity is a "white man's religion".

The 19 bishops of the 1,200,000-member African Methodist Episcopal Church in a message to the churches 5,000 congregations declared that "since nearly two thirds of the people (of Africa) are coloured this is our great test. Our victory over Communism and Islam can be assured if we learn to drop racial discrimination..."

EPS, Geneva.

#### US Baptists Commend President on School Aid Stand

(Washington, DC) - The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs representing 20,000,000 Baptists in the United States, has commended President John F. Kennedy for his firm stand against Federal aid to sectarian schools.

The committee, composed of representatives of the nation's six major Baptist conventions, issued a statement following its semi-annual meeting here which declared that the President is "worthy of special commendation" for clearly recognizing "the basic importance of the principle of separation of church and state".

"We are confident that Baptists in the United States are overwhelmingly in agreement with the views of the President to the effect that aid to sectarian institutions is clearly unconstitutional," the committee declared.

"Such aid would be a disservice to freedom and justice," it added. "It would start us on the road back into the tragic entanglement of church and state that has produced so much anguish and confusion in the course of human history."

Meanwhile, the Baptist group, along with Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU), and the American Jewish Congress, urged Congress to reject demands for low-interest Federal loans to parochial and other private schools.

Spokesmen for the three groups appeared before the Senate Labour and Public Welfare Subcommittee which is considering an Administration bill authorizing US\$2,298,000,000 in Federal funds for public elementary and secondary schools.

Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church have been pressing for an amendment providing for US\$350,000,000 in long-term, low-interest loans for construction of nonprofit private schools.





The Protestant and Jewish organizations represented at the Senate hearing contended that Federal loans at interest rates below the normal market clearly constituted aid and were therefore unconstitutional.

While the President merely expressed his personal opinion that "across-the-board" loans to all private schools would be barred, White House aides said Mr. Kennedy had consulted Government lawyers before expressing his views on the constitutional question at a news conference. EPS, Geneva.

#### Berlin Remains Site for 10th Kirchentag

(Berlin) - The 10th biennial Kirchentag - or German Evangelical Church Day Congress - will be held in Berlin July 19-23 as originally planned, despite the refusal of the East German Government to allow any public events to be held in the Soviet sector of the city.

This decision was announced by Kirchentag officials March 10, after repeated negotiations with East German authorities, who had agreed to permit the congress to be held in Leipzig. The church leaders said they turned down the offer because the East German Government "gave no guarantee that all the leading churchmen would be able to attend the meetings".

Singled out by some East German newspapers as "undesirable" were Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, and Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover, among others. Kirchentag officials said restrictions against these churchmen would involve the church in giving up its unity and the community of Evangelical Christians in Germany.

Moreover, East German officials had offered entry permits for only 10,000 West Germans, 5,000 West Berliners and 1,000 overseas visitors if the congress was to have been held in Leipzig, The London Times reported. The last Kirchentag, held in Munich in 1959, attracted some 500,000 persons!

Church leaders decided to re-examine the decision to hold the Kirchentag in Berlin after East German officials refused permission to conduct some events in the Eastern sector. Hans Seigewasser, Undersecretary for Church Affairs in East Germany, charged at the time that the churchmen had selected Berlin as the site with "provocative intentions". (See EPS No. 3).

Mr. Seigewasser also charged that the church had associated with militarism and that the congress would be misused for agitation against the East - East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia in particular.

The East German news agency ADN viewed the decision to hold the congress in Berlin after all as a sign of "the victory of the militaristic church group".

However, Dr. Kurt Scharf, new council president of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and head of the Kirchentag preparatory committee, explained that in making the decision church leaders followed "the road to which the Gospel calls us, in peace with all men".

Following the decision to hold the meetings in Berlin, the West Berlin Senate said it will respect and aid the congress in every way. It also expressed the hope that it would again attract Protestants throughout the country. EPS, Geneva.



In Brief

The All-Africa Consultation on "The Mission of the Church in Urban Africa", will be held near Nairobi, March 16-22. The consultation is part of the Urban African Project sponsored by the International Missionary Council and the All-Africa Church Conference. Participants will come from cities in the Congo, Malagasy Republic, Ghana, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Egypt. An announcement said the consultation is planned because of "a growing awareness on the part of many churches and missionary bodies that it is the urban areas which hold the key to the Africa of tomorrow...where the greatest challenge to the missionary task of the Church is to be found... and where the work of the churches is often weakest".

\* \* \*

Professor Hans-Werner Gensichen of Heidelberg University has been appointed an associate director of the Theological Education Fund, an international, cooperative venture of some 12 denominations for the up-grading of theological schools in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Dr. Gensichen, whose headquarters will be in New York, will be responsible for a specialized programme for the African ministry.

\* \* \*

A three-ton bell, bearing the inscription "And forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors", will be installed this summer in a chapel at the Dachau concentration camp near Munich, Germany. Funds for the bell were raised in a special campaign among Austrian Roman Catholics initiated by an Innsbruck locksmith, who was an inmate at Dachau. It will be installed at Agony of Christ Chapel, which was dedicated last summer as a memorial shrine for the victims of the Nazi era and especially for the thousands, mostly Jews, who were killed in the camp.

\* \* \*

US Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (Democrat-Minnesota) has introduced a resolution in Congress to authorize and request the President to proclaim 1961 as "Bible Anniversary Year". The senator noted that the Rheims-Ducay Bible used by Roman Catholics was issued in 1610, while the King James Version used by Protestants appeared early in 1611. He said that the 350th anniversary of these two versions should be an occasion for rededication to Bible reading.

\* \* \*

Government and ecclesiastical officials were among the crowds who filled the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Wellington, to attend the funeral of the former Anglican Primate and Archbishop of New Zealand, Dr. Reginald Herbert Owen, who died February 24. Dr. Owen, who was 73, had headed the Anglican community from 1952 until his retirement last March because of poor health.

EPS, Geneva.